The Women Who Lie in Wait for Harassed Members of Congress

Types of the Army Who Send in Their Cards to Representatives and Senators, Asking Favors of Many Curious Kinds, and What Certain Much Bothered Statesmen Think of These Persistent Callers.

WHEN a member of Congress spends his days in working for or against such momentous projects as tariff reductions, Canadian reciprocity, appropriations for this or that and other kindred subjects, he is doing what, to the popular mind, is precisely what he is sent there to do. But that he also consumes a goodly portion of his working day in receiving or avoiding women will be, perhaps, a more or less surprising statement to the average voter.

And yet, don't censure the Congressman for doing so. Nine out of ten times he's more eager to dodge his feminine callers than to see them. This business of basking in feminine smiles and being sought after by Milady Fair may be all right in story books, but it doesn't go in Congress. If he could do so the average member would turn over the job of receiving Phyllis and Cousin-Mary-from-the-Country and Mrs. Home Slater to any one who wants it—in a jiffy! And that does not mean he is necessarily a woman hater, either. But rather that always, day in and day out, a veritable army of women is besieging him him for favors of various sorts, and he really hasn't the time to listen to the pleas and still accomplish what he promised his constituents.

THE SIEGE OF CONGRESS.

They can be found either in the reception room of the House of Representatives or in the marble room of the Senate, chiefly, however, on the House side. From the opening day of a session until its close—these "women in waiting," as one Congressman facetiously calls them—are to be seen. Some of them are there for a short while only or, maybe, a single visit, but the majority are as firmly intrenched as the Rock of Gibraltar. A few are so new and diffident that the pages who take in their cards to the Congressmen have to tell them what to write and where to wait. They come for a million reasons, real and imaginary, and every shading of human pathos and comedy is exhibited in their self-imposed though none the less arduous task of waiting.

There are young girls, slender and fair, who come in groups, properly chaperoned, from boarding schools just to say "good day" to the member from their home state. They are frankly curious and vastly excited over the novel experience. They would just "love" to have passes to the reserved gallery, and they wax positively riotous over a pencil or a writing pad as a souvenir from the stationery room. They have no axes to grind, however, for which the Congressman is duly thankful. If he is too busy to see them, his excuse becomes a matter of personal pique and not a soul stirring tragedy.

There are women with the battle scarred faces of the unhappy aged. Some of them are in rusty black and make no attempt to conceal the poverty that drives them to this last hope of winning the sympathy of a man who can get them a government position or aid the passage of a certain bill. They are "on duty" each day, from noon to adjournment, in the stifling little room on the House side, which is merely a columned niche to the left of Statuary Hall. From it an inclined railed walk, not unlike a gangplank, leads up to a short hall directly opposite the central door of the House.

"WALKING THE PLANK."

When a member who has been sent for agrees to "come out" the woman making the request stands eagerly near this sloping bridge—and waits. One Representative has dubbed it "walking the plank." As the member descends, card in hand, he endeavors to obtain a comprehensive view of the room before reaching the bottom of the "plank." And there's a reason, too. If he espies a seasoned lobbyist or two standing around in the background the chances are he will have developed such momentum in his descent as to find himself clear beyond the room and into the middle of Statuary Hall before he can come to a stop.

And it is a 100 to 1 shot he will suddenly recollect some urgent business that will carry him all the way through to the Senate side of the Capitol. But—and here's the rub—Representatives really do have to work and the woman in waiting of this type does not; so she'll still be waiting there when the trapped member attempts to return.

If the two pages detailed for duty in this room do not grow up to be great actors it will not be because they lack daily instruction in the art of simulating emotions. The start of surprise with which some members greet their callers would have satified even Mansfield. The novice is either encouraged by the smile of welcome or plunged into despair by the frown of annoyance. But the "regular," to borrow a word from the vocabulary of the page, never even turns a hair at the manner of her reception. She just states her case placidly—maybe she is recalling it to ears already grown weary—and takes it all as a matter of course.

Sometimes the woman in waiting wants charity not for herself but for an institution or a crusade in the interest of reform or good health. Sometimes she asks promotion in the government service or political preferment for the men folks at home. Very often she seeks a vote on a certain bill, over which she has been slaving for years.

CALLING ON MR. BENNET.

Then there is the elderly woman who admits she is just "passing the time." One of her sort filled a generous section of the little room the day the writer helped swell the list of Congressional callers. She wanted to see the member from her home state—and he happened to be Mr. Bennet, who was not returned this session as Representative from New York, the "most sent for man in the House." She desired cards for the reserved gallery. Mr. Bennet graciously assented. Then she insisted upon chatting about various and sundry happenings in Gotham.

Mr. Bennet chatted and stood first on one foot, then on the other—the while the nation's business waited for at least that part of it under his direction. Several other women who had been sitting complacently in the background ostentatiously hovered nearer, for they, too, wished to talk with the man from the Empire State, and considered this a favorable opportunity.

At a large table in the centre of the room sits a young woman. All day long she takes the cards of the callers and gives the pages directions about carrying them in. She also sees that no woman has preference over her sisters in waiting in the length of time one has to wait for return messages. She is a most agreeable young woman, too, but she has a keen, discerning gray eye—two of them in fact. And whether it be part of her official obligations or a self-imposed task, she invariably comes to the rescue of a member about to be placed in a dilemma.

Nodding to a page, she manages to give the unobservant gentleman notice of the football rush in which he is about to figure. So, with a hasty "come-again-so-glad-to-have-seen-you" smile, he is able to make a quick exit backward up the inclined "plank" and thus escape the clutches of the hovering ones who had hoped to profit by the other lady's card.

Some of these women who wait are so patrician in look and manner that instinctively the pages know they have a Congressional right to be there. They are often the wives, relatives or personal friends of the members who have been invited up for luncheon or called to take their liege lords for a drive. And, as an attaché up there boyishly explained, "they always seem to arrive just when a fellow is deep in conversation with some good looking woman. Usually he is saying, 'Really, madam, I will do everything possible about your lame husband,' or, 'I assure you, ma'am, that I have already stirred the State Department up in reference to your brother.' But he can't well make his voice carry across and over the general pandemonium, and to the just arrived relative it looks like a pleasant little flirtation." As a matter of fact, no woman in her right senses would ever select that oppressive spot for any other than business reasons.

Speaker Clark believes that Congress should provide a more agreeable place in which women could receive and talk with the Representatives.

"Some people seem to think the main idea is to make things so uncomfortable for these women that they won't bother members by coming here at all," he said. "But they have a perfect right to do so. Not all of them, I admit, yet the fact that a number come up here just through curiosity or in hopes of graft does not justify the torturing of Representatives good natured enough to come out or of the callers who have legitimate business here.

"During the last session, somehow, I always seemed to be sent for when the room was most crowded, and there I had to stand, first on one foot and then the other like a crane, trying to keep my physical and mental balance at the same time.

"The woman with whom I might happen to have been talking was standing, too—there usually wasn't any place for her to sit—all of which was and is extremely annoying. Give them a more private room, I say, or at least a larger one, with easy chairs and lounges, as they have over in the marble room of the Senate."

Asked if he had many foolish callers, or, rather, callers with foolish requests, Mr. Clark replied emphatically in the negative.

"Women who come to see me usually come in all seriousness," he explained, "and that is why I never refuse, unless it is simply impossible, to receive them."

THE OMNISCIENT PAGES.

He wasn't idly boasting, either, for from the pages, who have every member "sized up," it was ascertained that among them Mr. Clark holds, or rather held, since he is now virtually tied down to the "chair," the record.

"Mr. Clark comes out if he possibly can," a page declared admiringly. "And if he can't, he usualy sends word when they can see him at his office."

Asked on what sort of errands his quota of femininity comes, Speaker Clark replied:

"On everything imaginable. There are women who want me to find their sons who have enlisted in the navy, for instance. I can't make them understand that I can only appeal to the Navy Department, and that they could do the same. They evidently think I have some mysterious power to make those fellows up there hustle. Of course, frequently these boys are under age and have taken a false name, making it impossible to trace them. But I try, and often get blamed for my stupidity in not locating them.

"I have had woman visitors who believe they have legitimate claims against the crown of some foreign country and ask me to look the matter up. And the men are as credulous about this as the women.

"The worst of all my female constituents are those who are interested in bills that will never pass. I admit that after I have talked with one of them numerous times, to the harrowing of both her feelings and mine, I do sneak out of seeing her. It's rather unfair, maybe, but I have to draw the line somewhere.

"And now that's about all I know, only I want to say that women have no reason to feel ashamed or uncomfortable when they come to the Capitol on necessary business, or even merely to 'see' their Representative or Senator. But I can't abide the crank who tries to claim relationship with me. If I had some of the time right now that I have had wasted for me by women trying to prove themselves my first cousin or fourth aunt, I could do something worth while with it."

COMPELLED TO LEAVE HIS SEAT AND WASTE HIS TIME TALKING TO WOMEN WHO HAVE NOTHING TO DO.

Mr. Bennet, of New York, catalogued his women in waiting, and insisted that, with few exceptions, they included all who tax his time.

"There are women who have pension claims and want me to look after them," he stated. "Sometimes they want them granted; again, to have them increased. I either promise to aid them, if I think them worthy, and do so, or beg to be excused. Women are rather impatient about some things, and I am lucky if a woman does not come back again more than half a dozen times during the session to know why I don't hurry along that matter for her. It is rather gratifying to have her indicate that I am the whole of 'Congress assembled,' but I can't just make the other legislators take that view."

"Do you ever have any cranks bother you about impossible bills?" he was asked.

He nodded affirmatively.

"Yes, I do. There was a poor, pitiful little old woman who had a bill on which she had worked and waited and half starved, until in desperation she took to drugs to keep going. Her actions here became so erratic that most of the members tried to dodge her, and the pages thought her a nuisance. Others of us saw the tragedy of it all, and really tried to help her. It was useless, though. They are the cases which make a Congressman's days unhappy—having to come out and deliver bad news to women who have hoped and planned and made themselves believe in what can never come about."

Another class of woman in waiting whom each of the Representatives interviewed spoke of is the one who, being in a government office, wishes either a promotion or a transfer. When she is from the state of the Representative to whom she applies, he of the party in power, and there is a vacancy available, the thing is not exceptionally difficult of accomplishment, but this is a trilogy of happy conditions not usually existing.

"Often," Mr. Bennet explained, "the woman does not definitely know just what she does want. She is dissatisfied with her present chief, or has a woman friend in another department with whom she would like to eat luncheon. Still, the many are rather businesslike, and entitled to what they ask through meritorious service."

Ralph Cameron, of Arizona, says that the member from near by always thinks he is more harassed by women visitors than the man who comes from a distance. Mr. Cameron represents Arizona, although he is not a Representative, because, to make a bull, his state is still a territory.

"It is true that not so many ladies call upon me as upon the gentlemen representing Maryland or Virginia, for instance," he said. "But they make up for it by asking trivial favors which occupy just as much time. Or, rather, it does because I am so busy. Some people think I am taking a vacation all the time, not realizing that I am the only man to look after matters for the whole of Arizona. Of course, though, I don't have many women to hunt offices for, because in my realm women are so scarce we won't let them come East if we can help it."

"And so, you have women from other places claim to be from Arizona?" he was asked.

"Well, yes, I suppose I do. Still, I am not called upon as frequently as are some of my colleagues. When they send for me they invariably want something. They never just want to meet me, in order to be able to say they have shaken hands with their representative.

"Never?" asked the interviewer.

"'Well, hardly ever,'" replied Mr. Cameron, in the words of "Pinafore."

"Don't you believe 'em when they tell you they never have cranks to deal with," advised a wise-faced page who has been at the Capitol for ten years.

"They pick out some one like Mr. Cameron if they want a reserved pass or one of the many small favors Congressmen from nearer places are too busy to grant. Some of them have the gall to ask a perfectly strange Representative to get them a government office, just because they know he comes from away off where women aren't as likely to be demanding such things. They haven't any vote to promise 'em, either. And maybe they don't light into us pages if they can't see a member when their card goes in! Any one would think I had them all up my sleeve!

"You see, when I take a card in and a Congressman doesn't want to see the lady he just gets up and moves over to the next desk. Then he looks at me and says, real seriously or with a smile, just according to the humor he's in: 'Tell her I am not in my seat.' So he isn't, and it saves him a lot of trouble and me from telling a story. They used to send word they weren't on the floor, but that was not the truth, and some of them decided it was bad for us pages to be always lying.

"One day last week I came back and told a lady that. She gave me a look—a school-teacher-sort-of look, you know—and started out. Another page whispered, 'She's gone to the gallery,' so I knew there'd be trouble. And there was—believe me, there was! She came sailing back with her face blazing. 'I thought you told me Mr. So-and-So wasn't in his seat!' 'Well, he wasn't!' I replied. 'He is, too!' she fairly screeched. 'I just went up to the gallery and saw him!' 'Anyhow,' was all I could answer, 'he wasn't in his seat when I came out last time, but I'll go in again for you.' And, worse luck, I had to bring back the same message next time!'

"Members of Congress are all right. They'll do a lot for us pages. Sometimes when I hear them listening so patiently to a yarn that a baby would know wasn't so, I think I wouldn't be like that. But then, you see, we hear the same old story being told to maybe half a dozen different members. I like the ladies best who just come up here because they are one of the family or friends of the members or those who aren't so suspicious. When a woman says to me: 'Take this card to Mr. Blank and see that he gets it, too!' it makes me mad. Why should we want him not to get it? Besides, finding him the first time saves us several more trips. But some of them won't believe it.

"Why, I have searched the floor, the cloakrooms and even looked up in the gallery to find a member, and then been told 'I believe he is in there this minute!' The most of them are very nice and pleasant. I feel awful sorry for the ones who have trouble. They are so timid and uneasy. But a lot of them just come in here to kill time."

"And make trouble for us," another page interposed. "I believe I draw all the cranks. Honestly, it certainly is funny sometimes. One day a lady about sixty years old came in and waited awhile. Then she beckoned me and said: 'Son, you go up to the gallery and on the lefthand side in the front row you will see a lady dressed in blue, with a black and white hat on. You tell her to come on down, as I have sent in my card for a member and can't leave.'

"I explained that I couldn't leave the floor and go to the gallery to get people. But she insisted and said something about going to luncheon, so I thought she was some relative of that Congressman, and I had better hike.

"Now, what boy, or man either, could pick out a woman by her dress, unless he were a detective? I believe half the women in that gallery had on dark blue. I picked out one, went up to her and told her that her friend was waiting downstairs. 'I haven't got any friend,' she snapped. 'You are an impudent boy. Go away!' When I got back the old lady had disappeared, but another dressed just like the one for whom I was looking was sitting there. I went to her and delivered the message. 'Sting!' I got called down again. And just then the old lady came back with the member and the woman she was waiting for, and her hat was olive and green at that."

The pages also told how discriminating women, who make a practice of coming to the Capitol every day during the session, select new members for the telling of their claims after the older ones have grown wary. Wishing to test this, one of the new members was sent for.

"I can't say I have had any unfortunate experiences along that line," he drawled, "but, of course, ladies do come to me for help. The most important thing I have been able to accomplish so far was in getting an appointment for a lady's son in the navy, or rather a promotion. She asked me to take it up, and I believe I have been successful."

But he unconsciously indorsed the story, as the lady was on that same task last session.

Nor must the little piercing eyed woman with a husband, who could hope to rise in life only by running an elevator, be overlooked. Every day last session she was right on the job with a supply of

Continued on seventh page.

CHARLES FLETCHER JOHNSON.
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Senator Johnson Declares Maine Is a Wet State

He Hopes Before Long to Wipe Out Her Prohibition Laws Which He Says Encourage the Most Flagrant Hypocrisy.

By James B. Morrow.

A KNOCK on the door of the Waterville Classical Institute caused all the students to raise their eyes and look in that direction. A tall, dark complexioned man, accompanied by a youth, came in and sat down in an old rocking chair by the stove.

The man was Hannibal Hamlin—once a printer—who had been Vice-President under Abraham Lincoln. The boy was his son, now a practising lawyer at Ellsworth, in Maine, and the partner of Eugene Hale, until recently one of the leaders of the United States Senate. He was to be left with old Dr. Hanson, the owner of the school, and prepared for college. Among the students in the room when the Hamlins entered was Charles Fletcher Johnson, the son of a harness maker over the river at Winslow.

Back in 1851 Hannibal Hamlin came to the Senate from Maine as a Democrat. He changed his politics, resigned his office and ran for Governor. He was put on the ticket with Lincoln in 1860. From 1851 to 1911—sixty years—no Democrat in Maine was elected to a seat in the Upper House of Congress. On April 4 just past there appeared in the United States Senate Charles Fletcher Johnson, the boy unnoticed by Hannibal Hamlin. The mysteries held by the future are some of the compensations for living, and give it speculative attractiveness and value.

Thus Johnson follows Hamlin through a broken line of succession, and the Democracy of Maine, marking time for three-fifths of a century, emerges from obscurity and is again seen and heard in the Senate. Unknown until recently outside of New England, except to those who specialize in party minutiæ, Johnson is not an arrow that has hit the mark accidentally.

"To be a Democrat in Maine," he remarked to me across the level mahogany desk in his senatorial office, "has been as uncomfortable in some respects as to be a Republican in South Carolina."

There are two kinds of cordiality—spontaneous and counterfeit. Senaor Johnson is a friendly person, instinctively, for that is his individual peculiarity. His laugh sounds genuine. He is big shouldered and gray-eyed. Sometimes he chuckles far down in his throat if there is any humor in the scene on which he is dwelling. Temperamentally he is a flood of sunshine. Politically he is in sympathy with the new movements of the time. He believes in the initiative and referendum. Prohibition, he says, is a fraud. He is an orator, a worker and a manager. In the story he told me of his first efforts in politics, he unintentionally pictured his industry, enthusiasm and pertinacity.

"How has the initiative and referendum law worked in your state?" I asked.

"We have put it to the test on only two occasions—once, when there was a vote about a bridge at Portland, and again over the question of dividing the old city of York. Both matters were local. The initiative and referendum was agitated in Maine for a number of years, starting with our farmers, who are well organized. Both political parties have indorsed the reform in their platforms. While I was in the Legislature I introduced a bill establishing the initiative and referendum and extending it so as to include amendments to our constitution. The Legislature was Republican, however, and voted it down, but passed another measure that omitted my constitutional provision. While the law has been tried in only the two instances I have mentioned, I am sure it will give satisfaction, because it affords the people an opportunity to suggest needed legislation and to veto any legislation that is against the public interest."

"Do you think that representativne government has proved to be a failure?"

"I do not, but in my opinion the initiative and the referendum will make representative government better and stronger, in that it will be a wholesome check on the members of our legislature who will not care to have their work nullified at the polls by the voters. Furthermore, the people will show a greater interest in public in public matters, and will be watchful where formerly they were indifferent. No bill passed by the Maine Legislature can go into operation until ninety days after the end of the session. Thus there is time for investigation. If a measure is bad, 10,000 voters, by signing a petition, can compel a direct vote of the people on that particular question. As for myself, I think the initiative and referendum is sound in morals and commonsense. If an act of any legislature can't stand argument and inspection, it ought to be voted into the limbo of things that never should have been."

"Maine," I said, "is supposed to be a 'dry' state."

"On the contrary," Senator Johnson replied, "it is a very 'wet' state. The prohibition amendment was added to our constitution by politicians who wanted to fool and please the rural regions. It has been used for political purposes right along—with prohibition in the country, where public sentiment is hostile to the liquor traffic, and with open saloons in the cities, where prohibition is not wanted by a majority of the people. It is a long story and not at all creditable to those concerned.

"While principal of the public school at Machias in 1884, I went to the polls and openly voted against injecting prohibition into the constitution of our state. Women were there, working among the men and serving hot coffee. It was at the head of the school system and was required, so I was told, to be a moral example in the community. The vote I cast then was right and I have never thought any differently. Drinking is an evil which I understand and condemn, but turning men into hyprocrites and lawbreakers is no remedy for a bad situation. I venture to say that if a candidate for office were publicly to announce that he meant to enforce the prohibition law he would lose twelve of the sixteen counties in the state.

"I believe that any law should be obeyed or repealed. If it is not obeyed, the demoralization of character begins, both individual character and the character of the community as a whole. All kinds of liquors can be bought in Maine, as I have said. Whiskey is shipped from Boston. Occasionally the saloons are closed temporarily. When that occurs, whiskey comes from other states in jugs and kegs and men who might ordinarily take a drink or two each day resort to secret places and stay drunk for a week to the neglect of their work at the mills and factories. Drinking clubs are common in the state. Whisky is sold at our hotels; one can smell it while he is registering his name, as its odor comes welling out of the barroom. And what are the consequences? Lying and lawbreaking by dealers and purchasers and the corruption of sheriffs and police officers. In Portland, at one time, only a single brand of beer could be sold. The brewer, you understand, paid for the privilege of monopolizing the trade. If a saloonkeeper attempted to sell some other brand he was arrested and his place was closed. Meanwhile, the dealers in liquor are voting the ticket of the party that governs the city or county in which they are located. When a sheriff honestly tries to enforce the law, he is defeated for re-election. In the phraseology of our business men, such a sheriff 'is lacking in tact.'

"The Democrats some years ago elected the Sheriff of Cumberland County. In that county is Portland, our largest and greatest commercial city. The Sheriff was a man of integrity and the brewers could not buy him up. Knowing the sentiment of the public, he told the saloonkeepers that they could continue in business, but that they should not sell on Sundays or holidays or after 10 o'clock at night. The Democratic state platform declared the liquor amendment to the constitution should be executed or voted out. The Sheriff disregarded his party and the law and established a platform and a constitution of his own, which was regulation. I told him he would be beaten when he ran the next time.

"'Why,' he said, 'I've shown preachers and members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union over the town and they say conditions in Portland are better now than when I came into office.'

"That Sheriff was re-elected. The business interests said that he 'was a man of tact.' To me such connivance with lawbreaking is intolerable. Governor Glenn of South Carolina visited Maine to investigate our educational institutions. He is a Christian man and the teacher of the largest Bible class in Raleigh, the state capital. He witnessed our violations of the liquor law and expressed his amazement in my presence, saying that no such shameless conduct would be permitted anywhere in the South. Liquor will be drunk. I believe in controlling its sale and manufacture. Next September we are to vote again on state-wide prohibition to ascertain if the present constitutional amendment is to remain a part of the organic law of the commonwealth. When prohibition fails, as I think it will, I want a commission composed of men like William De Witt Hyde, president of Bowdoin College, to search the world and give us the very best scheme of liquor regulation."